



Read to Lead Development Council

Meeting notes from August 21, 2018

The Read to Lead Development Council met on August 21, 2018 from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM.

Council members present at the meeting included:

1. Eloise Anderson, Chair of Read to Lead Council, Secretary of Department of Children and Families
2. Barb Evanson, Fox Valley Technical College
3. Jill Hoiting, SFTA
4. Brooke Newberry, Winding Rivers Library System
5. Suzette Preston, Director 4K, Appleton School District

Others in attendance

6. Mandy Reeve, Department of Children and Families
7. Brad Wassink, Department of Public Instruction

Council members participating via phone included:

1. Wanda Montgomery, Milwaukee Children's Hospital
2. Mark Tyler, OEM Fabrications
3. Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt

Others in attendance via phone:

1. Chloe Gibbs, University of Notre Dame
2. Dee Pettack, Department of Public Instruction
3. Jeff Pertl, Department of Public Instruction
4. Jennifer Metzger
5. Kathy Champeau

Meeting facilitation services and notes were provided by staff from Credens LLC.

The Council did not have a quorum.

Introduction

Secretary Eloise Anderson called the Read to Lead Council meeting to order, and announced that this was a public meeting and noted that information about it had been posted in multiple places.

Secretary Anderson welcomed new members to the Council. She explained that day's meeting would be different than previous Council meetings. This meeting would be a thinking session, a forward-looking, "dream day." She asked that even though the Council has very few financial resources, what do Council members want to do, since the Council members brought much talent, and had the opportunity to restructure or evolve.

Secretary Anderson noted that the Read to Lead Development Council was given to DCF because DCF oversees child care in Wisconsin. She asked the Council to consider ways to bring Read to Lead fully into DCF. Specifically, she asked how the Council related to pre-literacy and how families engage with very young children around literacy.

DCF staff reviewed several existing pre-literacy programs and found one that fit within the Council's fiscal constraints: **Ready4K**. This is a texting program that helps young children develop language literacy by delivering a curriculum of early-literacy facts and ideas to parents. Ready4K partnered with the University of Notre Dame to implement its program. The Council was asked to consider how it might support Ready4K.

Guest Presentation

Professor Chloe Gibbs, University of Notre Dame, Lab for Economic Opportunity (LEO)

Professor Gibbs noted that Ready4K has partnered with DCF and Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for approximately a year now, and she is excited to see that partnership and the program come to fruition.

Ready4K is a text messaging curriculum for parents and is administered by ParentPowered. The curriculum provides opportunities for parents to help children develop early literacy skills. The program sends parents three text messages per week: Monday: FACT; Wednesday: TIP; Friday: GROWTH IDEA. A discussion followed that some Council members have reviewed samples of the text messages and they gave them positive reviews and found the ideas helpful.

The curriculum has been tested in three rigorous studies and is considered evidence-based. It is aligned with early learning standards and available in English and Spanish. There is interest in translating the curriculum into Hmong for Wisconsin.

The Ready4K project partners are ParentPowered, Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities, DCF, DPI, Read to Lead Council, and participating school districts.

In Wisconsin, Ready4K is testing a summer curriculum that will be delivered to parents in the months before their children start Kindergarten. Ready4K seeks to determine if parent participation in this program affects parental behaviors as well as their children's early literacy skills. The summer messaging would include general as well as tailored messages, such as local library programming and other information specific to each school district. Ready4K is working with a large and diverse sample of participants across large Wisconsin school districts, giving them the ability to follow students' long-term outcomes. Programming is available from birth through grade 3, but is expected to be particularly

relevant in the summer months before Kindergarten. Summer programming will be available beginning in summer 2019. Dr. Gibbs shared slides with details about Ready4K's study timeline and deliverables.

Ready4K offers the following benefits:

- All parent participants will receive the Ready4K core curriculum throughout the school year;
- Each school district will receive ongoing support from Ready4K;
- After the study concludes, districts will continue to have access to the curriculum content.

Currently in Wisconsin, Ready4K is working with four unnamed school districts to recruit and enroll families and students, which could involve up to 2,000 4K families. Ready4K is in negotiations with four additional districts. Researchers are finalizing data-sharing agreements and developing the summer texting content. The team is also exploring how to translate the curriculum into Hmong.

ParentPowered is providing 80% support for the project (\$93,670). The LEO research team is contributing resources to conduct the study, parent survey, and data sources. Ready4K is asking this Council for \$23,600 to fund the project in full.

There was discussion about the Council's annual appropriation, which is \$23,600. The Council's statutory guidance is that the "Council shall make recommendations to the secretary and superintendent of DPI regarding the recipients of grants. Amount shall be determined jointly by secretary and superintendent." Brad Wassink noted that the recommendation is more important than the amount requested, and that the Council's decision-making process is to be:

- 1) Council makes a recommendation;
- 2) Joint approval between secretary and superintendent is needed;
- 3) Amount of funding is decided.

Since the Council did not have a quorum, members will vote via email in the very near future.

Expert Presentation

Dr. Amanda Reeve, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and Jill Hoiting, SFTA

Council staff Amanda Reeve and Council member Jill Hoiting discussed how a separate Governor's council (Early Childhood Advisory Council's, ECAC) successfully prioritizes its efforts, as an example for the Read to Lead Development Council.

The ECAC's mission is to make recommendations, to the Governor, that help ensure kids are healthy, safe and ready to learn. ECAC's steps match its operations cycle with the department's budget cycle::

1. Eye on the System (**Needs Assessment**): Brainstorm.
2. What needs to be done? (**Action Steps**): Refine three problem statements to determine what issues the Council is going to address.

3. How should we advise the Governor? (**Refine and Prioritize**): Consider the potential of bully pulpit, budgetary, and legislative priorities to determine solutions.
4. Who can help with remainder? (**Stakeholders work**): Who are other stakeholders that can advance remaining priorities?
5. Message what we decide (**Annual report**): Compile findings for the Governor in an eye-catching printed piece that can be used for advocacy, budgetary, and legislative priorities.

Review Read to Lead Development Council's MISSION STATEMENT

Draft: "The mission of the Council is to support literacy and early childhood development programs to help reduce opportunity gaps and ensuring that all children in WI enter school with the skills they need to learn to read."

The Council members had each received a pre-meeting assignment to provide feedback on the draft versions of the Council's mission, scope and priorities. The meeting facilitator reviewed the seven Council member's responses received by the staff prior to the meeting. Three of the seven respondents agreed with the draft as it was written. The Council discussed the following topics as it worked to refine the mission:

1. Adding the word "language":
 - Language is the foundation of literacy
 - "Language literacy" is more expansive than "literacy"
 - "Language" mitigates the general sense of the word "skills"
 - "Language" incorporates dual language
2. The word "skills" and its definition:
 - The term "skills" is a red flag for many
 - There is a dichotomy between educational centers that understand the development of language and literacy versus those that only focus on letters and letter sounds
 - "Skills" was intended to include the pre-K literacy development, including rhyming, what a book is, alphabet skills, etc.
 - There is a wide continuum of skills that children in 4K and Kindergarten possess
 - The Council does not want to appear to be defining what skills they are looking for in 4K

The Council decided that a phrase was needed that did not sound as prescriptive as "skills," and decided upon "a language and literacy foundation that supports learning to read." After the preceding discussion, the Council agreed to the following updated mission statement, in alignment with the statute:

"To support language and literacy and early childhood development programs to help eliminate opportunity gaps and ensuring that all children in WI enter school with a foundation that supports learning to read."

Brad Wassink clarified that the Wisconsin statute notes that the mission of the council is to make recommendations to the Secretary and State Superintendent of DPI regarding recipients of grants in support of literacy or early childhood development programs. The Council further discussed where to use the word “development.”

Review Read to Lead Development Council’s PRIORITIES

Draft:

1. Improve the early literacy skills of children at the beginning of Kindergarten;
2. Involve and engage parents and families in the important role they play in their children’s literacy development;
3. Provide professional development and technical assistance to early childhood care providers around development early literacy skills;
4. Reduce achievement gaps .

The meeting facilitator reviewed the seven Council member’s responses received by the staff prior to the meeting. Three of the seven respondents agreed with the draft as it was written. The Council discussed the following topics as it worked to refine its priorities:

1. Minor edits included:
 - Replace “at the beginning of” with “from birth through”.
 - “Community” and “community partnerships” is missing, for example, libraries, zoos, grocery stores, etc.
 - “Improve” is problematic..
 - Instead of “parents” use “caregivers/parents”
2. Considerable discussion followed re: priority #4: Reduce achievement gaps.
 - Replace “achievement gaps” with “opportunity gaps.”
 - “Reduce” or “Eliminate” these gaps?
 - “Eliminate” is aspirational, which is what mission statements are.
 - This goes back to mission statement, so change “reduce” to “eliminate”.
 - Is our priority incremental improvement (#1) or overall change? The answer will affect the scope of the Council.
 - An opportunity gap is different from building skills.
 - There are incremental AND visionary dimensions within these priorities.
 - What does opportunity gap mean? That’s what the Council wants to eliminate. Kids entering kindergarten have math, literacy, conceptual, technological deficits.
 - Comment: Kids are lacking the opportunity to learn, the experiences to gain these skills.
3. Considerable discussion took place about the difference between mission statement and priorities
 - How does the Council’s priorities relate to its mission?

- What is difference between mission and priorities? Priorities are actionable, can change over time. The mission is more constant and overarching.
- Is priority #4 needed?
- It is important to be consistent about “language and literacy” between mission and priorities.
- What to do with #3? Do we do that? Fund that? To “involve” is different than to “provide”. This is an important area to the governor, education, getting people ready for the economy we are starting. Should it be a separate bullet point of the priorities, or part of an existing one?
- Community and partnerships play an important role.

The Council discussion led to the following priorities, with the understanding that the Council will continue considering and updating its priorities:

1. Improve the early literacy skills of children from birth through kindergarten;
2. Involve and engage caregivers / parents and families in the important role they play in their children’s literacy development;
3. Provide professional development and technical assistance to early childhood care providers around developing early literacy skills;
4. Eliminate opportunity gaps.

Review Read to Lead Development Council’s SCOPE

The Council’s statutory responsibility is to make recommendations to the Secretary of DCF and State Superintendent of DPI regarding grants from the Read to Lead Development fund. The grants are to support literacy and early childhood development programs.

Draft: “With the very limited funds remaining in the Read to Lead Development, a possible expansion of the scope and statutory responsibilities of the Council could include:

- Conducting a needs assessment around important areas of need in WI related to early literacy;
- Developing recommendations for improving early literacy skills in children including outreach to underrepresented and special populations;
- Identifying opportunities or, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among existing local, state, and national programs and services.”

The meeting facilitator reviewed the seven Council member’s responses received by the staff prior to the meeting. Six of the seven respondents agreed with the draft as it was written, and the seventh respondent preferred to not expand the scope.

Secretary Anderson noted that the Council needed a new scope and encouraged the Council to consider what it wanted to do and how it would do it. The funding level of the Council is unknown, yet money may not be the only way to achieve the Council’s goals. There are many ways to be influential, including promoting new ideas, priorities, and advisories to legislators.

Council members discussed that they needed to align what the Council did, with its mission. It had various options for its scope, including altering the scope, going back to soliciting grant proposals, and determining what to fund. Without substantial money, the Council would have to be creative about how it could impact the mission, which would require the Council to think differently.

The example of ECAC was discussed, since it had no budget, but has had impact and influenced outcomes, specifically regarding language and its ability to influence other arenas.

Advocacy for, or to parents: It was suggested that the Council could speak to parents about what they need to do in the early days regarding talking to babies, forming attachments, etc., and could address questions like: How can working parents help their young children? How can younger parents learn this since it is very different than how their parents were? How to help the parents who were not parented themselves at a young age? It would be very important for the Council to be able to approach parents who need such advocacy.

Identifying and disseminating best practices: The Council discussed an example of a United Way program (family-friendly workforce certification) from northern Wisconsin where employers are able to offer more family-friendly services and educate their employees. Such programs allow employers to bring in early childhood experts, differentiate themselves in hiring and retaining employees, build family-friendly practices and develop resources for delivering those services. Employers are also able to deduct their investments for tax purposes, making them a win-win. One challenge is insufficient administrative support to run such programs.

Coordinating priorities between DCF and DPI: The Council will need to bring a new Secretary of DCF up to speed in the near future. The Council could advise the Secretary and the Superintendent on issues that face 0 to K, even though the outcomes might not be concrete.

The Council discussed needing to change / alter the scope while complying with the statute. The Council members are very representative of the whole State of Wisconsin, and there is great opportunity for the Council to make an impact even with limited funds.

Force Field Analysis: Discussion of Enablers and Barriers

The Council next identified select enablers that would help the Council achieve its priorities, and some barriers that might hold the Council back.

Enablers (not prioritized):

1. The Council's interest, passion, and solid understanding of the key issues involved.
2. The Council's ability to look at issues creatively and from the parents' perspective, and to consider how to engage parents and what information do parents need.
3. Local libraries and community organizations are already doing this work; the Council can build upon other successful efforts.
4. Consider small-scope actions, breaking the problems down, and taking "baby steps".
5. A focus on multi-level systems of support for kids, not just K-12.

6. Our scientific community's research into early childhood brain development means we can use the latest research to develop helpful strategies.
7. Our own imagination; the diversity and expansiveness of the Council.
8. The current economic condition of WI: we have the best economy in the Midwest, employers are looking at hiring people they wouldn't have looked at before, so now is a good time to "do something while we can."
9. The opportunity to educate legislators about early childhood development.
10. The opportunity to engage parents before their kids come to school.
11. Community organizations are already going to where the families are, for example a library van that makes book deliveries.
12. Local technical colleges are reaching early childhood teachers in innovative ways, such as adding evening/weekend and accelerated programs.
13. The Council includes representation across political party lines. It would be very valuable to come before legislative bodies with both sides already in agreement on key issues.

Barriers (not prioritized):

1. Many people do not understand the brain development process for 0- to 5-year-olds; there is a misconception that "babysitting time" is not developmentally important.
2. Those parents and caregivers who most need to show up at school information sessions often do not show up.
3. The community is less involved in raising children now than it was decades ago and therefore families are isolated.
4. It is difficult to recognize inequity in opportunities; people believe everyone has the same opportunities they had, and that's not true.
5. Our own imagination, for example, saying, "I can't do that, because...."
6. There is a significant workforce shortage in early childhood education settings.
7. Our economy does not value early childhood workers.
8. Institutionalism and sectionalism.
9. Political barriers or a lack of bipartisan support; sometimes political opposition exists for the sake of opposition, rather than what is true and factual.
10. "We've always done it this way;" those who are in the trenches working with young children haven't seen or don't know other approaches.
11. The workforce knowledge base is affected by its high rate of turnover.
12. Secondary school counselors believe that anyone can do early childhood education, so they don't push the brightest kids into that path; people don't understand the specific expertise that is required to work with young children successfully.
13. Keeping childcare tuition within financial reach means that childcare wages are very low; but still, childcare is very expensive.
14. How early childhood is generally (under)valued.

Review of the Session

The Council reflected on the session, noting issues that stood out for them, ideas that got them more engaged, and elements that worked or did not work for them:

- Secretary Anderson appreciated having a facilitator because then she can participate and be part of the group.
- It was a Council member's first meeting and she was glad she was here in person.
- The consistent message throughout the meeting of "early language and literacy" was addressed throughout the conversation.
- Happy with the conversation so far.
- Great exploration of ideas.
- Secretary Anderson asked the Council how she could more engage the participants who have to participate via phone. The Council discussed using Skype, screen capture, or screen projection tools. DCF staff will ask their IT team for recommendations.
- Secretary Anderson asked the Council if they would like to hear from invited expert guest speakers. She suggested experts on the emotional side of kids, since so many kids are living with trauma and adverse childhood experiences. The Council agreed with that idea and noted that guest speakers would bring added value to the Councilmembers.

Mandy Reeve explained the next steps that Council staff will take:

- Those who participated via the phone can share any additional feedback they may have with Mandy and it will be incorporated into the meeting notes.
- Meeting notes will be shared with the full Council.
- The November meeting will be discussed and planned.
- Secretary Anderson will initiate the Council's vote about funding Ready4K.

Secretary Anderson made the following closing comments:

- In response to the comment that Wisconsin did not elect to expand Medicaid: Changes to Medicaid made by the Governor have led to single unemployed men being eligible for Medicaid for the first time. This especially helps men coming out of prison.
- In Wisconsin, regulated childcare, which accounts for the majority of childcare, is very good. Even in a program earning 2 stars, the health and wellness of kids is good. Programs rated 2 through 5 stars show positive outcomes for children.
- As the Council considers its recommendations to the Governor, it should also think about what he will carry.

Secretary Anderson thanked the Council members for attending and participating. She noted that the next meeting is scheduled for November 27, 2018 at DCF, and it will be her final meeting with the Council. She again thanked the Council and adjourned the meeting at 4:00 pm.